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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8202
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2983
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5997
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2402
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, JULY 6, 2007

In Today's Papers

Constitutional Court Rules Referendum on Election of President by Popular Vote
All papers report the Constitutional Court rejected appeals from both the main opposition party CHP and President Sezer to annul the constitutional reforms on a legal technicality, paving the way for a referendum probably on October 21. Analysts say the Constitutional Court unexpectedly backed the AKP government's plans to hold a referendum on constitutional reforms. The constitutional changes include election of the president for two five-year consecutive terms by popular vote, reduction of the parliamentary election period from five years to four, and stipulation that a quorum of 184 lawmakers would be enough to elect a president.

If Turkish voters do back the reforms in the referendum, they will have a chance to elect their president directly in 2014, after Sezer's successor, due to be chosen by parliament this summer, has served a seven-year term. If the parliament fails to elect a new president after July 22 this year, general elections will be held again. In that case, constitutional changes will apply to the presidential election to be held seven years later.

Prime Minister Erdogan hailed yesterday's court ruling but said he would not comment before seeing a detailed justification from the court.

Russian-Kazakh Partnership Buys Turkish Oil Refiner
All papers report a 51 percent stake in the state-owned petrochemicals company Petkim was sold for USD 2.05 billion to the Russian-Kazakh partnership Trans-Central Asia Petrochemical Holding joint venture. Mainstream papers question who is behind the consortium, with several of them reporting that Trans-Central Asia was a consortium of a Russian bank owned by an Armenian businessman and of a Kazakh oil company controlled by the US Transmeridian company, and that the leading partners of the consortium were a Jewish and an Armenian businessmen. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet

says there are Arab and Russian companies and an Armenian businessman behind the consortium. The Islamist-oriented papers Yeni Safak and Zaman note that according to the stock values as of Wednesday evening, Petkim's total shares were worth USD 1.42 billion, and that the level of the bid showed confidence in Turkey's economy despite the upcoming elections.

In June 2003, an 88.86 percent share in the company had been auctioned off to the Uzan family for USD 605 million in a deal which was cancelled two months later after the Uzans failed to meet the requirements. A second tender was held in August 2003 for the block sale of Petkim. That sale failed due to lack of investor interest.

Terrorists Killed in Turkey; Germany Detains PKK Members
Papers report Turkish soldiers killed five PKK terrorists, including two women, as they tried to plant a roadside bomb in the eastern province of Tunceli on Wednesday evening. A village guard was also killed in the fighting.

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report German police have detained 22 PKK members and an unidentified leader of the organization in security operations in five states for alleged arson attacks against Turkish businesses across the country.

Poll on Presidential Election, Voters' Preferences
Islamist-oriented Zaman carries an opinion survey which shows that 60.7 percent of Turkish voters think the AKP government's stance on presidential elections was correct while only 21.7 percent think the main opposition party CHP was sincere in its desire for a compromise. With regard to voters' preferences, 83.1 percent of respondents said political party leaders' traits matter for them

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when casting votes. The survey shows expectations of the new government include increased economic welfare, elimination of terrorism, lowering of unemployment, and improvement of human rights and freedoms. The number of undecided voters has decreased to 16.4 percent, down from a recent percentage of 20.6. About 10 percent of those surveyed say they will not vote in the July 22 elections.

Editorial Commentary on Hamas, Turkish Incursion into Iraq
Ferai Tinc observes in the mainstream Hurriyet: "While the international community is exerting efforts to support Fatah, Hamas is giving the message that the stability of Palestine is in their hands. Hamas is giving the message that they are the owner of the region, through the released journalist who was shown on TV a few days ago with explosives tied on his body. The British government conveying their appreciation to Hamas, and the UN and the EU applauding Hamas for the Johnston release, indicate that there will be interesting developments in the near future."

Mehmet Tezkan writes in the mainstream Vatan: "Prime Minister Erdogan is on one TV channel; Foreign Minister Gul is on another channel, shouting and saying that 'if the military say that we need to enter Iraq tomorrow, we will enter tomorrow.' Listening to these statements one could easily think that the Turkish military will launch a cross-border operation tomorrow or the day after into Northern Iraq. But, the fact is, there is no such plan. Both, Erdogan and Gul are giving messages aimed at domestic politics. They are trying to get [nationalist party] MHP supporters' votes, and trying to block the strengthening MHP's path. AKP government knows very well that it is almost impossible to launch an operation into Northern Iraq if the US doesn't give a green light. Never mind an extended operation but, even a limited operation is difficult to launch without the green-light from the US. So, every single remark on a cross-border operation by the leaders is aimed to get more votes in the July 22 elections and these remarks do not reflect the facts."

TV Highlights
NTV, 7.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- Yasemin Kinik, a 19-year old woman who was 1.5 month pregnant, was killed by her father for "staining the family honor" when she divorced her husband and returned home to the southeastern city of Sanliurfa.

- The annual ministerial conference of the "Least Developed Countries" will be held in Istanbul on July 9-10.

- Environmentalist organizations claim 500,000 trees have been cut down in the Mediterranean town of Belek near Antalya to construct golf resorts.

- The Istanbul Stock Exchange (IMKB) reached a record high on Thursday with the benchmark index hitting 49,777 points by the end of the initial trading session.

International News

- Russian First Deputy Minister Sergei Ivanov said Moscow could deploy missile units in the Kaliningrad exclave near Poland if Washington goes ahead with its missile defense plans in Central Europe.

- Iraqi Parliament has failed to start debate on a key oil despite Prime Minister al-Maliki's efforts to bridge divides among his Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish coalition members and push the long-delayed bill.

- Amnesty International said in a statement, "Torture, ill-treatment

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and killings continue to be met with persistent impunity for the security forces in Turkey."

- Australia's Defense Minister Brendan Nelson admitted oil is one of the reasons for its presence in Iraq.

WILSON